
City: Bike lanes coming to Massachusetts Avenue

Posted by Sara Brown

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By Sara Brown, Town Correspondent

Boston is planning on installing bike lanes on a busy stretch of Massachusetts Avenue, according to a city official.

The lanes would be added to both sides of the avenue from the Charles River to the Symphony area, said Nicole Freedman, director of Boston Bikes, and they could be installed as early as "this season" -- likely this summer.

The city hosted a meeting last week at the Boston Public Library to gauge interest for the lanes, and it was well-attended by supporters, Freedman said.

"Based on the meeting, it's clear that there's a lot of support for [the lanes]" she said, with the crowd "very, very strongly in favor" of the addition.

To install the lanes properly, she said, would require removing parking on the eastern side of the street, on which traffic goes north toward Cambridge, she said. The city would work with businesses with regard to loading zones and handicapped parking, she said, as well as adjust bus loading zones. According to the city, that lane would eliminate about 71 parking spaces.

"We're confident we can make that happen," she said.

On the western side of the street, where traffic moves south, the lane would be installed next to the current parking lane.

According to Boston Bikes, bikes account for about 6 percent to 14 percent of vehicles on Massachusetts Avenue during peak hours, and there were 89 bike crashes from 2005-2009 within the project limits

Bike lanes cost about \$25,000 to \$50,000 per mile, Freedman said, with the proposed lanes spanning less than a mile. She said the Massachusetts Avenue lanes would likely run on the higher end of this estimate because of the work involved.

At the Symphony area, the bike lanes would hook up with bike lanes installed by the state, Freedman said.

"We really want to go for it," said Freedman, with the city next taking the steps to make the project work from an engineering standpoint.

At the end of 2010, Boston had 35 miles of bike lanes on city roads, including bike paths and lanes on Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue.

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